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Productivity Hints and Tips - Working with Files

File Types

There are so many different types of files that sometimes it can be difficult to remember where a file originated from or what programme or [software](#) you use to open and edit the file. Well, here I have listed the most common file extensions you are likely to encounter, along with brief explanations of their origin - hope it helps!

Document File Extensions

.txt - This extension denotes a text file, one of the simplest word-processing documents. Windows will open this file by default using the inbuilt [text editor](#), Notepad, and all [word-processing applications](#) will open a simple text file with this suffix.

.doc - Microsoft Word creates these files. (Also .docx files). This is an extension for a word processing file, and is recognised by all modern [word-processors](#). Depending on which software you are using and which version of Microsoft Word was used to create the .doc file, various features of the document may or may not be recognised when opened.

.xls - This suffix denotes a spreadsheet that has been created by the Microsoft Excel programme. Many [freeware](#) spreadsheets will recognise and open this kind of file.

.csv - A file with this extension is filled with data that is separated by commas. It is used to supply data to spreadsheets and databases and can be opened by Excel, [Word Processors](#) and [Text Editors](#).

.rtf - This file extension stands for Rich Text Format. [Word Processors](#) are able to open and edit this kind of file which has more sophisticated formatting than a simple text document.

.ppt - This suffix is appended to Microsoft PowerPoint files, an Office presentation programme.

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.ppt - This suffix is appended to Microsoft PowerPoint files, a presentation programmes which is part of Microsoft's [Office suite](#).

.pdf - The .pdf extension is very common on the [World Wide Web](#) and is often encountered when downloading catalogues or brochures online. The extension denotes an Adobe Acrobat portable document file and you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader or a [freeware pdf](#) equivalent to open it.

.tmp - denotes a temp or temporary file. These temporary files are often created as a [text editor](#) or [word processor](#) is working and sometimes they get left behind when they should have been automatically deleted by the software.

.bak - an extension frequently given to [backup files](#) - it is usually safe to delete .bak files only if you are sure you have a good copy of the original file itself.

Graphic File Extensions

.gif - This suffix is appended to a graphic in GIF format that opens in a [World Wide Web browser](#) or graphics program.

.jpg - File extension that denotes a graphic is rendered in JPEG format (Joint Photographic Experts Group). .jpg and .jpeg files can be viewed with [web browsers](#) or [image editing programs](#).

.png - graphic in Portable Network Graphics format which allows cross platform operability.

.swf - This file extension denotes a Flash file, a Macromedia Shockwave Flash animation movie. Flash movie files will open with most modern [web browsers](#), which may prompt for the Flash plugin from Macromedia to be installed first.

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Compressed File Extensions

.zip - This kind of file has been compressed using [Zip software](#). It can be decompressed and the contents read by many of the [freeware zip programmes](#) available or use Winzip to open zip files.

.rar - Another compressed file sometimes encountered online. Some [freeware software](#) that unzips files will also decompress .rar files otherwise WinRAR opens this file.

World Wide Web File Extensions

.htm and **.html** - Either of these extensions apply to files on the Internet that are designed to be viewed with [World Wide Web](#) browser such as Internet Explorer, Mozilla or Opera.

.php is a file extension for the php scripting language which is used to deliver dynamic web pages.

.cgi is an extension that denotes a PERL script file. Used by web-servers to deliver dynamic content.

.asp is seen as an extension to web pages and stands for active server page. Used by scripts to connect to [databases](#).

Executable File Extensions

.exe – This is an executable file or [self-extracting archive file](#), and when clicked will run a program of some sort. Be wary of executable files of any sort that come from an unknown source, i.e. attached to an email. Because they are program files they can actively damage your [system](#) if malicious.

.scr – Another executable file, this one is an extension for a [screen saver](#).

.com – Another executable file, similar to .exe, from the MS-Dos operating system.

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